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THE POPE, THE FATHER OF JEWISH APPROBATIONS.

NEITHER the Bible, nor the Talmud, nor the mediaeval Jewish literature knows of Approbations. No prophet ever asked for the consent of any authority to his promulgations, nor any doctor of the Talmud, to his opinion, nor any philosopher, to his system. Even in the Middle Ages, when influenced by its surroundings, the Jewish religion assumed more than ever the character of an authoritative religion, it did not, as far as I know, occur that any author had the excellence of his Halachic work "approved" by a recognized authority. Every literary product was to find the recognition which it merited from its own intrinsic worth. There was no previous approbation, just as little as there was a previous censure. Censure and approbation are twin sisters, children of the same kind of protective spirit.

The approbation is, like the censure, a product of the art of printing. Literature, after the new invention, had become a democratic institution. The representatives of power and authority were therefore sensible of the necessity of some means to arrest the spread of disaffected and—as they thought—dangerous productions of the press. On the other hand, useful books should be assured a quicker and greater circulation by previous approbation. The publisher, whose expenses were in jeopardy, was obliged, much more than the author, to desire an approbation. It may, however, have taken some time before an adequate form, satisfactory to the publisher, was found.

I think, that the first approbation, attesting the worth of the work, and, at the same time, meeting the wishes of the publisher, is contained in the ordinance of Clement VIII of the year 1592. In this edict, printed in every Catholic Bible, by which the Vulgate was introduced, the Pope ordains:—

"Cum sacrorum Bibliorum vulgatae editionis Textus summis laboribus, ac vigiliis restitutus, et quam accuratissime mendis expurgatus, benedicente Domino, ex nostra Typographia Vaticana in lucem prodeat: Nos. . . . inhihemus, ne intra decem annos a data prae-sentium numerandos, tam citra, quam ultra montes alibi quam in nostra Vaticana Typographia a quoquam imprimatur . . . Si quis vero Typographus in quibuscumque Regnis . . . hanc eandem

sacrarum Scripturarum editionem intra Decennium praedictum quoquo modo . . . imprimere, vendere, venalem habere, aut alias edere vel evulgare . . . praesumserit, ultra amissionem omnium librorum, et alias arbitrio nostro infligendas poenas temporales, etiam maioris excommunicationis sententiam eo ipso incurrat, &c."

Then follows the express recommendation of the new edition to the patriarchs, archbishops, &c.

One might think one was reading a *הסכמה*. The work is praised, a reprint prohibited within ten years, unless provided by the printing-office of the Vatican. In the Jewish approbations this would be expressed thus, that the printer could permit a reprint. Contravention of the ordinance would be followed by punishment, eventually by excommunication¹. All these are points which we meet again in the Rabbinical edicts; *inter alia* the express recommendation to buy the book.

I do not know who gave the first approbation, or who took it, and to which work, &c. An index of the approbations, the want of which has been pronounced for a long time from many parts, has not yet been supplied. I found no reference to such in J. B. de Rossi's *Annales Hebraeo-Typographici*, in which work the incunabula are registered, although the printer found it necessary to defend his new art against opponents (v. Berliner, *Ueber den Einfluss des ersten hebräischen Buchdrucks auf den Cultus und die Cultur der Juden*, p. 6 sqq.), which means, that he needed a "Haskama." Even if there were Jewish approbations before 1592, the year that the official Vulgate was printed, yet the characteristic points of the latter approbations were undoubtedly taken from Clement's ordinance. My remarks are only meant to be suggestive.

LUDWIG BLAU.

BUDAPEST.

¹ On the history of the origin of the official Vulgate, see Nestle, *Ein Jubiläum der lateinischen Bibel zum 9. November, 1892; Marginalien und Materialien*, Tübingen, 1893, last part.